



MEMORANDUM

Date: March 25, 2015

To: Senator Paul Davis, Chair
Representative Michael Shaw, Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

From: Chandler Woodcock, Commissioner

Subject: Letter regarding L.D. 156 in lieu of testimony.

Dear Committee Members,

The Department is opposed to the bill as written.

Under current Maine law, a junior hunter is eligible to hunt when they are at least 10 years of age yet under the age of 16 years old. The junior hunter must be in the presence of an adult supervisor which is defined as the parent, guardian or a person who is 18 years of age or older who is approved by the parent or guardian and currently holds or has held a valid Maine hunting license or has completed a hunting safety course. The adult supervisor is required to have the junior hunter "in the presence of" which means within visual and voice contact without the use of visual or audio enhancement devices to include but not limited to binoculars and radios.

We would encourage the Committee to carefully consider the proposal in front of you which allows children younger than 10 to hunt without having a safety course and allows them to hunt with the current supervision restrictions in law. If the Committee supports this proposal, we believe a mandatory safety course should be considered. We would encourage the Committee to eliminate the age restriction to hunt and in conjunction with this, we suggest a mandatory safety course for all hunters.

Additionally, if you should support this proposal we would encourage you to study the current supervision restrictions and be aware that at this time they do not speak to a ratio regarding how many youth one adult supervisor can supervise, the proximity of the adult supervisor to the youth hunter and these provisions do not prevent a parent supervisor who has never hunted from taking that child hunting nor do the restrictions require the youth to be under the supervisor's immediate control.

As we look at our hunting incident record for the last ten years, we find a total of 75 incidents. Of those incidents, 7 involved a shooter who was 16 or under. Five of these were self-inflicted and two were situations where the youth shot another hunter. The self-inflicted incidents involved acts of mishandling loaded firearms while the two-party incidents involved the shooter not properly



identifying his or her target and/or checking the surroundings for another hunter. All of these occurred while under the supervision and presence of the adult.

The Department is completely supportive of encouraging our youth to participate in hunting but urge you to fully consider safety as an important factor.

If you have any additional questions or concerns please feel free to contact Commissioner Woodcock at 287-5202 or Christl Theriault, Assistant to the Commissioner at 287-1197.